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Caring for Our Community

Fight fire...

There are men and women from all walks of life across the country who give hundreds of hours of their time each year as members of the volunteer fire brigades that serve our communities. The volunteers number about 8000. Their unstinting work supplements the duties of the nation's 1600 paid fire-fighters in reducing the incidence and consequence of fire.

Without these volunteers, towns of all sizes would be without a fire brigade. This is significant here in Kapiti and Horowhenua where volunteers undertake all fire fighting and a range of other emergency duties, including motor accidents.

Levin is one "cog" in the Horowhenua fire service wheel, with a further seven volunteer units to answer fire calls and emergencies across the district.

Carl Beissel, is the volunteer support officer at Levin. He points out that the Horowhenua district is protected by voluntary teams and their appliances in Waitarere, Foxton, Foxton Beach, Shannon, Himitungi and Tokomaru.

"Each of those units has one appliance, while Levin has two plus a spare, which is on standby to provide back-up elsewhere in the event of a major call-out," he said.



John Backler - Waikanae Fire Chief (left) and his deputy Alan Tinney.

In total, the Horowhenua brigades have around 117 volunteers with newcomers always welcome, added Mr Beissel.

Further south, Otaki, Te Horo, Waikanae, Paraparaumu and Paekakaririki have similar voluntary units. Ian Allen, the district support officer at Paraparaumu says continuing growth in the Kapiti region is placing more pressure on his team's 35 volunteers.



Left: Paraparaumu Fire Station, showing one of their appliances and Ian Allan, the Station Chief Officer.

"We can always do with more volunteers," he said, pointing out that all fire-fighters have to undergo training programmes before they are allowed to ride in the fire trucks. With the initial training programmes requiring attendance two nights each week plus some weekend courses and tests, it can take between three and six months before new recruits are ready to join fire-fighting or emergency teams.

From then on training is on going to equip the fire fighters to handle a variety of challenges in addition to fires.

John Backler with 23 years' service leads the 26 strong Waikanae unit, formed in 1952.

He has bouquets for the people of his community who give the fire fighters very good support.

He describes the residents of Waikanae as "very fire conscious," adding, however, that the installation of smoke detectors would improve fire safety. "We are only too happy to provide people with information about fire detectors", said Mr Backler. He also mentioned the importance of water and water pressure, saying that when the fire sirens sounded all hoses should be turned off, especially with the approach of Summer.

Any readers interested in becoming volunteer fire fighters or wanting other information about fire safety issues should contact their local brigades.

...with volunteers!



Spring - a good time to insulate

Yes it's spring - a great time to think about insulating for summer and next winter.

A lack of insulation in your home makes it harder to heat and to keep yourself warm and comfortable when it counts.

Building standards have ensured houses built since 1977 have insulation in the walls, ceiling and under floor. Fully insulated homes need about half the heat input of those without insulation to keep you nice and cosy.

Insulation keeps the house cooler and more comfortable in summer too.

For a house built before 1977 it's difficult to insulate the walls, but you can see (and feel) the difference ceiling and under floor insulation could make.

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